

young man trying to live in a cheap apartment while he paints; the girl dissatisfied with woman's sphere in this imperfect world and on fire for a New York job; the young married couple trying to lead a family life in the megapolis—over each of these broods the shade of Carol Kennicott. Mr. Fleming is of the opinion that they all ought to go back home. One may share Mr. Fleming's enthusiasm for the ancient human values alive in dear old Dixie, but this retreat southward doesn't seem quite to answer the question.

Or maybe I am all wrong. Maybe Mr. Fleming wanted to write an historical novel about New York life among the rising generation in the twenties. Or maybe he had some material around and thought he ought to write another book. I dunno. All I can truthfully say is that "To the Market Place" does not seem to me quite to come off.

Brought Back to Life

DEAD NED. By John Masefield. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1938. \$2.50.

THERE can be no harm in telling at once the plot of Mr. Masefield's latest narrative, for it is set forth upon the title page for all to see: "Dead Ned: The Autobiography of a Corpse, Who recovered Life within the coast of Dead Ned, And came to what Fortune you shall hear." There is an intentional play upon the word here, for Ned is not only the name of the young lad who is hanged at Newgate Prison, London, for a crime he did not commit, but also the name of a particularly dark and bloody section of the African slave coast. Hanged at Newgate, brought back to life, and off to Africa on a slave ship—such is the course of Ned Mansell's career in eighteenth century London. Let the reader, who wonders that England's poet devotes his energies to this fantastic tale, press on with his reading, and soon he will become aware of an old savor he may have thought had passed out of English literature two centuries ago. He will note the old picaresque design as fresh as it ever was, the straight narrative moving on with time, the easy multiplication of robust characters coming and going, all veracious and recognizable, the careful detail of English scene, interior and exterior alike, and especially the simple level of consciousness upon which the narrator, Ned himself, tells his story, so straightforwardly free of all the pale casts of thought that two hundred years of literary experiment have brought to the novel. More briefly, Mr. Masefield has written, in the twentieth century, an eighteenth century novel. It is a beautiful revitalizing of an old manner, entirely worthy of its writer. It is only fair to add that this is but half the tale; there is a second volume to come.

Fleet Streeter

WORLD OF ACTION. By Valentine Williams. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1938. \$3.50.

Reviewed by EUGENE LYONS

FOREIGN correspondent, soldier, novelist, lecturer, world traveler, Valentine Williams has brought to each of his many vocations and avocations a lusty appetite for life, a keen mind, and a fine appreciation of the nuances of people, places, and events. Though crowded to overflowing with adventures, ideas, and personalities, "World of Action," his autobiography, yet remains urbane and unhurried. It is—or seems to an American reviewer—very English in its restrained telling of a crowded and zestful tale. From first page to last the book makes delightful reading, and its author emerges as a very civilized and very likable human being.

Mr. Williams's father was one of the editors of Reuter's almost from that news agency's inception. His brother, Douglas Williams, now chief U. S. correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, is among the best-known British journalists. He was thus born into newspaper work, and at twenty-one, in 1904, was already foreign correspondent in Berlin. By the time the World War started he was a veteran reporter and became Northcliffe's principal war correspondent. Disgusted by the censorship, he gave up reporting for fighting and served creditably as captain in the Irish Guards.

Wounds and shell shock diverted him to fiction, and in twenty years he has produced twenty-four volumes of it—novels, detective and mystery yarns, short stories. But the umbilical cord connecting him

with Fleet Street was never cut. He returned to cover the Versailles peace negotiations, to tour Morocco for the press, and to work on other newspaper assignments.

The rich story of this career, more than thirty-five mature years spent busily in the thick of great affairs, Mr. Williams tells largely in terms of interesting people, great and humble, whom he has known. He is far more interested in characters than in causes, and he has the gift of bringing those characters to life: rulers, from Kaiser Wilhelm to President Roosevelt; diplomatists and famous reporters; actors and explorers; generals and fellow-novelists.

Unlike most recent journalistic memoirs, which deal largely with the post-war world, "World of Action" is particularly detailed and convincing in its record of the pre-war Europe — the Europe of Nicholas II, Emperor Franz Joseph, the German Kaiser, the Balkan wars, the Portuguese Revolution. After the war Mr. Williams's interests centered increasingly in his literary work. The chapters which he devotes to the methods and heartaches of the story-teller's craft should be especially interesting to literary men, even as most of the rest of the volume is especially interesting to newspaper people.

Mr. Williams's impressions of America, in the last part of the book, disclose his talents of observation and his sympathetic intuitions with particular clarity to an American reader. In two sojourns on this side of the ocean, before and after the Great Crash, he passed through fascinated bewilderment to clear-headed understanding of the miracle that is America. His record of the process will tell Americans a great deal that they have overlooked or forgotten.



Bomb Outrage—King Alfonso's Wedding Procession, 1906. (From "World of Action.")

The Obsolete Ego

APROPOS OF DOLORES. By H. G. Wells. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1938. \$2.50.

Reviewed by GEORGE DANGERFIELD

THIS novel is in the form of a diary. The diarist, Stephen Wilbeck, an English publisher, recalls among other things the thirteen years of his married life with a lady named Dolores. The thirteen years end rather abruptly because, about two thirds of the way through the book, Stephen gives Dolores an overdose of sleeping mixture and she disappears from a world in which, had she lived, she would have become the outstanding example of a perfectly appalling old woman. For Dolores is completely, malignantly bad.

She is so bad—"assertion and avidity incarnate," says Stephen, "... the most completely, exclusively, and harshly assembled individuality I have ever known..."—that one is tempted to believe that she must actually have existed. But Mr. Wells warns us in his prefatory note against this sort of speculation. He says that every character in his book is fictitious, and so we must judge Dolores according to fictional standards, in which case she becomes rather improbable. She is, as Stephen Wilbeck says, "a jackdaw collection" of gestures, accents, clothes, mannerisms. Mr. Wells is a mighty looker-on, and many a character of his in the past has been little more than a collection of observations taken from here, there, and everywhere; but a collection arranged by a master hand which moves the pieces to and fro with such dexterity that they produce an illusion of unity and life. With Dolores the hand seems to falter now and then; the collection slows down, disintegrates, stands still; and instead of a woman, all we can see is a rather strident disarray of ill-assorted nastinesses.

This doesn't happen very often, but it happens often enough for the reader to feel bewildered and put out. He begins to wonder why on earth Mr. Wells bothered with Dolores. And then he realizes, with considerable relief, that Mr. Wells is merely up to his old tricks, just using Dolores to illustrate a thesis, just writing a novel that is not really a novel but a vehicle for some more ideas.

The thesis which underlies this grim little tale is that human beings should not, perhaps, be distributed into races, cultures, and peoples, but into genetic types. The Dolores type is "emphatic, impulsive, and implacable." It is ego-centered. It cannot adapt itself to the modern world. The Stephen Wilbeck type, "probably a recent mutation, observant, inhibited, and disingenuous," is not entirely ego-centered, and may survive the wreckage of

this civilization. The other characters represent yet other types.

The thesis is often disagreeable and sometimes muddled, because Stephen and not Mr. Wells is supposed to be setting it forth; and Stephen elaborates a large part of it while under the influence of brandy. And even when Mr. Wells removes the Stephen mask and peers out at us as himself, we feel inclined to say, "Oh, surely you could do better than that." But the fact remains that, in spite of our doubts, we go on reading, interested, even absorbed. Mr. Wells is a humorist, he has

a superb observation, his attitude to life—even when he seems to be having a lark at our expense—is fundamentally serious. The combination is hard to resist. Very few serious writers know how to be serious; how to keep the reader moving on from one notion to the next without giving him time to get bored. Mr. Wells does know how to be serious. He shepherds us along like a genial usher with a long experience in handling crowds. It is only when we have been ushered out of the last page that we pause to ask ourselves whether, in this instance he was sure what it was that he was being serious about.

George Dangerfield is the author of "The Strange Death of Liberal England."

Philosophic Dog

JOURNEY OF TAPIOLA. By Robert Nathan. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1938. \$1.75.

Reviewed by ROSEMARY CARR BENÉT

IT is hard to sum up a LaFontaine fable or one of Mr. Disney's masterpieces. "There was a thrifty ant and a grasshopper who didn't like to work..." And then? The reviewer must end up by saying, "It was all in the way it was told."

So it is with Robert Nathan's latest book, "Journey of Tapiola." It is the subtle, underlying implications that count in this fantasy. Tapiola is a very small Yorkshire terrier. He belongs to the wife of a publisher, Mrs. Poppel. He leads an indolent and pampered existence until the urge to be a hero comes over him and he fares forth to grapple with life. He and Richard, an equally adventurous canary who longs to go to Hollywood and emulate Mr. Nelson Eddy or Mr. Lawrence Tibbett, escape. They hide in an ash-can which, in turn, is removed by the Department of Sanitation. Our heroes find themselves on a garbage barge in the river where they have a series of horrifying adventures. They meet a rat named Jeremiah, as gloomy and unpopular a prophet as his Biblical namesake. Together, like the Three Musketeers, they manage to escape. They return home, sadder for their adventures and wiser for their philosophizing. Tapiola has been hungry and afraid; he has even been obliged to give a lecture on "Literary Afternoons or Life at Mrs. Poppel's,"—but he has lived. He has also found a soul-mate who understands him, a gentle lady rabbit who is lost in admiration before him.

This is a roman à clef. Mrs. Poppel is

undoubtedly Mrs. Knopf. Mr. Robert Nathan is Mr. Robert Nathan. As to "the eminent critic Stuart Orrin" who has large feet and who says, "It is impossible to have a popular success under a thousand pages..." your guess is as good as mine. Tapiola is himself.

The delicate humor and wisdom which mark Mr. Nathan's work are here in abundance. This, for instance, is a discussion of love.

"It is hard for me to believe," said Tapiola, "that love and hatred are as closely related as you say. Of course I am not very big, but my heart is large, and I have been in love more than once. I experienced in each instance an emotion of indescribable tenderness, mingled with respect; with occasionally some sadness and loss of appetite. In my opinion, love is a sort of medicine, it is a tonic which stimulates certain parts of the body at the expense of others."

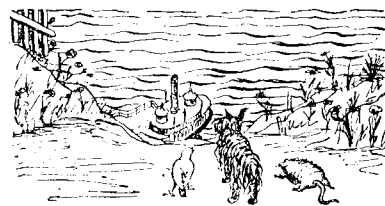
"Does not hatred do the same?" asked Jeremiah.

"I am talking about love," said Tapiola.

In his earlier books, Mr. Nathan had a Greek chorus of animals, watching and commenting on his people. In his subsequent success and

preoccupation with humans, the animals disappeared. I always regretted this, remembering Musket, the dog, and Bartholomew, the rooster, in "The Fiddler in Barly," and the wonderful fox in "Jonah," who, after discussing with Jonah whether Jehovah was a Jew or a fox, remarked philosophically, "Well, a beard or a tail, that is merely a matter of direction." Now in Tapiola, I find this inimitable touch again.

Tapiola once twitted a Great Dane, Ch. Lance von Habich by saying, "It is only your great size which makes you in any way remarkable." This book, like its hero, is small but remarkable.



"The urge to be a hero comes over him" ... (Drawing by George Salter).